AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 4, 2015

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JULY 16, 2015

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 28, 2015

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 6, 2015

SENATE BILL No. 291

Introduced by Senator Lara
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Gomez, O'Donnell, and Rendon)

February 23, 2015

An act to amend Section 131019.5 of the Health and Safety Code, and to amend Section 4060 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 291, as amended, Lara. Public health: vulnerable communities.

(1) Existing law establishes the Office of Health Equity within the State Department of Public Health for the purposes of aligning state resources, decisionmaking, and programs to accomplish various goals relating to health, and requires the office to perform various duties specifically relating to vulnerable communities, as defined. Existing law requires the office to establish a comprehensive, cross-sectoral strategic plan to eliminate health and mental health disparities and inequities and to seek input from the public on the plan through an inclusive public stakeholder process.

This bill would include individuals who have experienced trauma related to genocide in the definition of vulnerable communities and would require representatives from vulnerable communities to be represented in the public stakeholder process for developing the office's plan to eliminate health and mental health disparities.

(2) Existing law requires the State Department of Health Care Services to provide, to the extent resources are available, technical assistance, through its own staff, or by contract, to county mental health programs and other local mental health agencies in the areas of program operations, research, evaluation, demonstration, or quality assurance projects. Existing law requires the department, to this end, to utilize a meaningful decisionmaking process that includes, among others, stakeholders as determined by the department.

This bill would require the department to include specified stakeholders from vulnerable communities in this process, including diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and LGBTQQ communities, communities that experience trauma related to genocide, women's health advocates, mental health advocates, health and mental health providers, community-based organizations and advocates, academic institutions, local public health departments, local government entities, and low-income and vulnerable consumers.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 131019.5 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

131019.5. (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) "Determinants of equity" means social, economic, geographic, political, and physical environmental conditions that lead to the creation of a fair and just society.

(2) "Health equity" means efforts to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.

(3) "Health and mental health disparities" means differences in health and mental health status among distinct segments of the population, including differences that occur by gender, age, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or income, disability or functional impairment, or geographic location, or the combination of any of these factors.

(4) "Health and mental health inequities" means disparities in health or mental health, or the factors that shape health, that are systemic and avoidable and, therefore, considered unjust or unfair.

(5) "Vulnerable communities" include, but are not limited to, women, racial or ethnic groups, low-income individuals and families, individuals who are incarcerated and those who have been incarcerated, individuals with disabilities, individuals with mental health conditions, children, youth and young adults, seniors, immigrants and refugees, individuals who have experienced trauma related to genocide, individuals who are limited English proficient (LEP), and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) communities, or combinations of these populations.

(6) "Vulnerable places" means places or communities with inequities in the social, economic, educational, or physical environment or environmental health and that have insufficient resources or capacity to protect and promote the health and well-being of their residents.

(b) The State Department of Public Health shall establish an Office of Health Equity for the purposes of aligning state resources, decisionmaking, and programs to accomplish all of the following:

(1) Achieve the highest level of health and mental health for all people, with special attention focused on those who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage and historical injustice, including, but not limited to, vulnerable communities; culturally, linguistically, and geographically isolated communities; and communities that have experienced trauma related to genocide.

(2) Work collaboratively with the Health in All Policies Task Force to promote work *in order* to prevent injury and illness through improved social and environmental factors that promote health and mental health.

(3) Advise and assist other state departments in their mission to increase access to, and the quality of, culturally and linguistically competent health and mental health care and services.

(4) Improve the health status of all populations and places, with a priority on eliminating health and mental health disparities and inequities.

(c) The duties of the Office of Health Equity shall include all of the following:

(1) Conducting policy analysis and developing strategic policies and plans regarding specific issues affecting vulnerable communities and vulnerable places to increase positive health and mental health outcomes for vulnerable communities and decrease

health and mental health disparities and inequities. The policies and plans shall also include strategies to address social and environmental inequities and improve health and mental health. The office shall assist other departments in their missions to increase access to services and ~~supports~~ *support* and improve quality of care for vulnerable communities.

(2) Establishing a comprehensive, cross-sectoral strategic plan to eliminate health and mental health disparities and inequities. The strategies and recommendations developed shall take into account the needs of vulnerable communities to ensure strategies are developed throughout the state to eliminate health and mental health disparities and inequities. This plan shall be developed in collaboration with the Health in All Policies Task Force. This plan shall establish goals and benchmarks for specific strategies in order to measure and track disparities and the effectiveness of these strategies. This plan shall be updated periodically, but not less than every two years, to keep abreast of data trends, best practices, promising practices, and to more effectively focus and direct necessary resources to mitigate and eliminate disparities and inequities. This plan shall be included in the report required under paragraph (1) of subdivision (d). The Office of Health Equity shall seek input from the public on the plan through an inclusive public stakeholder process that includes representatives from vulnerable communities.

(3) Building upon and informing the work of the Health in All Policies Task Force in working with state agencies and departments to consider health in appropriate and relevant aspects of public policy development to ensure the implementation of goals and objectives that close the gap in health status. The Office of Health Equity shall work collaboratively with the Health in All Policies Task Force to assist state agencies and departments in developing policies, systems, programs, and environmental change strategies that have population health impacts in all of the following ways, within the resources made available:

(A) Develop intervention programs with targeted approaches to address health and mental health inequities and disparities.

(B) Prioritize building cross-sectoral partnerships within and across departments and agencies to change policies and practices to advance health equity.

(C) Work with the advisory committee established pursuant to subdivision (f) and through stakeholder meetings to provide a forum to identify and address the complexities of health and mental health inequities and disparities and the need for multiple, interrelated, and multisectoral strategies.

(D) Provide technical assistance to state and local agencies and departments with regard to building organizational capacity, staff training, and facilitating communication to facilitate strategies to reduce health and mental health disparities.

(E) Highlight and share evidence-based, evidence-informed, and community-based practices for reducing health and mental health disparities and inequities.

(F) Work with local public health departments, county mental health or behavioral health departments, local social services, and mental health agencies, and other local agencies that address key health determinants, including, but not limited to, housing, transportation, planning, education, parks, and economic development. The Office of Health Equity shall seek to link local efforts with statewide efforts.

(4) Consult with community-based organizations and local governmental agencies to ensure that community perspectives and input are included in policies and any strategic plans, recommendations, and implementation activities.

(5) Assist in coordinating projects funded by the state that pertain to increasing the health and mental health status of vulnerable communities.

(6) Provide consultation and technical assistance to state departments and other state and local agencies charged with providing or purchasing state-funded health and mental health care, in their respective missions to identify, analyze, and report disparities and to identify strategies to address health and mental health disparities.

(7) Provide information and assistance to state and local departments in coordinating projects within and across state departments that improve the effectiveness of public health and mental health services to vulnerable communities and that address community environments to promote health. This information shall identify unnecessary duplication of services.

(8) Communicate and disseminate information within the department and with other state departments to assist in developing

strategies to improve the health and mental health status of persons in vulnerable communities and to share strategies that address the social and environmental determinants of health.

(9) Provide consultation and assistance to public and private entities that are attempting to create innovative responses to improve the health and mental health status of vulnerable communities.

(10) Seek additional resources, including in-kind assistance, federal funding, and foundation support.

(d) In identifying and developing recommendations for strategic plans, the Office of Health Equity shall, at a minimum, do all of the following:

(1) Conduct demographic analyses on health and mental health disparities and inequities. The report shall include, to the extent feasible, an analysis of the underlying conditions that contribute to health and well-being. The first report shall be due July 1, 2014. This information shall be updated periodically, but not less than every two years, and made available through public dissemination, including posting on the department's Internet Web site. The report shall be developed using primary and secondary sources of demographic information available to the office, including the work and data collected by the Health in All Policies Task Force. Primary sources of demographic information shall be collected contingent on the receipt of state, federal, or private funds for this purpose.

(2) Based on the availability of data, including valid data made available from secondary sources, the report described in paragraph (1) shall address the following key factors as they relate to health and mental health disparities and inequities:

(A) Income security such as living wage, earned income tax credit, and paid leave.

(B) Food security and nutrition such as food stamp eligibility and enrollment, assessments of food access, and rates of access to unhealthy food and beverages.

(C) Child development, education, and literacy rates, including opportunities for early childhood development and parenting support, rates of graduation compared to dropout rates, college attainment, and adult literacy.

(D) Housing, including access to affordable, safe, and healthy housing, housing near parks and with access to healthy foods, and housing that incorporates universal design and visitability features.

(E) Environmental quality, including exposure to toxins in the air, water, and soil.

(F) Accessible built environments that promote health and safety, including mixed-used land, active transportation such as improved pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile safety, parks and green space, and healthy school siting.

(G) Health care, including accessible disease management programs, access to affordable, quality health and behavioral health care, assessment of the health care workforce, and workforce diversity.

(H) Prevention efforts, including community-based education and availability of preventive services.

(I) Assessing ongoing discrimination and minority stressors against individuals and groups in vulnerable communities based upon race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, marital status, language, sexual orientation, disability, and other factors, such as discrimination that is based upon bias and negative attitudes of health professionals and providers.

(J) Neighborhood safety and collective efficacy, including rates of violence, increases or decreases in community cohesion, and collaborative efforts to improve the health and well-being of the community.

(K) The efforts of the Health in All Policies Task Force, including monitoring and identifying efforts to include health and equity in all sectors.

(L) Culturally appropriate and competent services and training in all sectors, including training to eliminate bias, discrimination, and mistreatment of persons in vulnerable communities.

(M) Linguistically appropriate and competent services and training in all sectors, including the availability of information in alternative formats such as large font, braille, and American Sign Language.

(N) Accessible, affordable, and appropriate mental health services.

(3) Consult regularly with representatives of vulnerable communities, including diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and LGBTQQ communities, women’s health advocates, mental health

advocates, health and mental health providers, community-based organizations and advocates, academic institutions, local public health departments, local government entities, and low-income and vulnerable consumers.

(4) Consult regularly with the advisory committee established by subdivision (f) for input and updates on the policy recommendations, strategic plans, and status of cross-sectoral work.

(e) The Office of Health Equity shall be organized as follows:

(1) A Deputy Director shall be appointed by the Governor or the State Public Health Officer, and is subject to confirmation by the Senate. The salary for the Deputy Director shall be fixed in accordance with state law.

(2) The Deputy Director of the Office of Health Equity shall report to the State Public Health Officer and shall work closely with the Director of Health Care Services to ensure compliance with the requirements of the office's strategic plans, policies, and implementation activities.

(f) The Office of Health Equity shall establish an advisory committee to advance the goals of the office and to actively participate in decisionmaking. The advisory committee shall be composed of representatives from applicable state agencies and departments, local health departments, community-based organizations working to advance health and mental health equity, vulnerable communities, and stakeholder communities that represent the diverse demographics of the state. The chair of the advisory committee shall be a representative from a nonstate entity. The advisory committee shall be established by no later than October 1, 2013, and shall meet, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis. Subcommittees of this advisory committee may be formed as determined by the chair.

(g) An interagency agreement shall be established between the State Department of Public Health and the State Department of Health Care Services to outline the process by which the departments will jointly work to advance the mission of the Office of Health Equity, including responsibilities, scope of work, and necessary resources.

SEC. 2. Section 4060 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

4060. The State Department of Health Care Services shall, in order to implement Section 4050, utilize a meaningful decisionmaking process that includes local mental health directors and representatives of local mental health boards as well as other stakeholders in vulnerable communities, including diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and LGBTQQ communities, communities that experience trauma related to genocide, women's health advocates, mental health advocates, health and mental health providers, community-based organizations and advocates, academic institutions, local public health departments, local government entities, and low-income and vulnerable consumers. The purpose of this collaboration shall be to promote effective and efficient quality mental health services to the residents of the state under the realigned mental health system.

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